

# R WE REALLY OK?

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Mental health is everyone's business. When we consider that over [4 in 10 Australians](#) will experience a mental health issue in their lives, rates among [younger people have increased by 47%](#) in just 15 years, and the [rising cost of living](#) is affecting the mental health of 1 in 2 Australians – there is good cause for all sectors to help, including brands.

While we've come a long way in acknowledging the importance of mental health, helped in no small part by the work of [R U OK](#), [World Mental Health Day](#), [Movember](#), [BeyondBlue](#), the [Black Dog Institute](#), [ReachOut](#) and others – stigma and barriers persist, and there is more to do.

T garage explored Australians' experiences with mental health, their help-seeking behaviours and views on the role and permissibility of brands in this space, via an online quantitative survey with a nationally representative sample of Australians (n=635) in early October

## **ANYONE, ANYWHERE, ANYTIME**

Mental health issues and experiences reach all corners of society – more than 60% of women, students and young people surveyed experience anxiety at least once a month. More than half of Australians experience psychological distress at home or at work (54%, 53%), and nearly half experience psychological distress in social settings (47%) – places normally considered to be safe havens.

## **STIGMA COMES IN MANY FORMS**

When it comes to talking about mental health challenges, Australians describe a range of barriers with embarrassment and fear of judgment chief among them.

At work: shame, embarrassment, fear of being ridiculed, seen as less competent or weak, fear of losing their jobs

*"I might lose respect"*  
*"A perception that you're not up to the job"*  
*"You may be overlooked for an opportunity if you are seen as not able to deal with stress"*

In social settings: fear of mockery or rejection, fear of being 'labelled', perceived as weak, not wanting to burden others

*"It's not fair to trauma dump on people"*  
*"Admitting you are struggling"*  
*"Being ignored or diminished in some way"*  
*"It makes you feel inferior"*

At university or TAFE: a lack of support, understanding, misplacing trust, environmental pressures

*"Not knowing where to access resources or how it could help"*  
*"Being stereotyped, considered as sick"*  
*"It's a very busy environment and it is hard to not feel overlooked"*

## AUSTRALIANS ARE OPENING UP

There are signs Australians feel [increasingly able to seek help](#) – among those we surveyed 1 in 2 had reached out to family and friends (51%). Smaller proportions had used formal resources such as counsellors or psychologists (17%), in part due to cost barriers – with close to half agreeing they “would like to access mental health services but it’s too expensive” (47%). Media and digital services are providing avenues with 1 in 3 using mass media resources e.g. YouTube, Spotify (33%), and nearly 1 in 5 using digital services and apps (19%).

## BRANDS CAN TAKE A STAND

There is broad acceptance that brands can play a positive role in helping, using platforms and profit for societal benefit. Some 71% agree brand initiatives normalise open conversations around mental health and 68% feel positive towards brands that use initiatives to help.

Sample sentiments on ways brands can help:

*"Just making the discussion around mental health a normal thing we do"*

*"More around the conversations you should feel OK to have with others"*

However executing this in a way that is genuine and not self-promoting isn't easy to get right. More is needed than mere platitudes – 57% say these initiatives do more to promote the brand than support people experiencing mental health issues.

*"I feel like it's more about brands trying to get their own brand out there rather than any true desire to help with mental health"*

*"It can look a bit like they're profiting from mental health challenges"*

*"For some brands it would simply feel performative"*

## MOVING BEYOND TOKENISM

Australians would like brands to bring their resources and influence to help in more settings, more often, and in more meaningful, nuanced ways.

Sample sentiments include:

More frequent, 'always on' initiatives, rather than 'once a year' events	<p><i>"It needs to be an everyday topic"</i></p> <p><i>"Frequency is the key rather than specific timeframes"</i></p> <p><i>"Just keep the conversation going front and centre"</i></p>
Normalising conversations	<p><i>"It's OK to not be OK"</i></p> <p><i>"Maybe show the stigma we all know is there"</i></p> <p><i>"Make it easier to be more open about it"</i></p> <p><i>"Speak without euphemisms"</i></p>
Connecting to real life	<p><i>"Show examples of real people that struggle"</i></p> <p><i>"Ambassadors who have had trouble with mental health speaking out"</i></p>
Supporting existing initiatives	<p><i>"Support campaigns to improve access to mental health care"</i></p> <p><i>"Donate to organisations like Beyond Blue"</i></p> <p><i>"Donate to community orgs that support mental health especially in diverse communities and underprivileged communities"</i></p>
Looking within	<p><i>"Talk about mental health at their businesses and normalise it for their employees"</i></p> <p><i>"Support their workers Pay them a living wage that enables them to access good mental health care/create safe working environments"</i></p>

## LOOKING FORWARD

There is still much to do to improve the national mental health conversation, but with the help of all sectors – business, not-for-profit, government and community – we can hope to make stigma a thing of the past.

Connect with us if you would like to find out more.

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